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Paula's Letter



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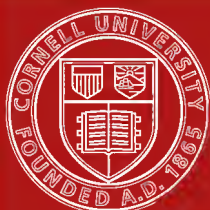
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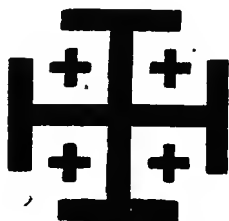
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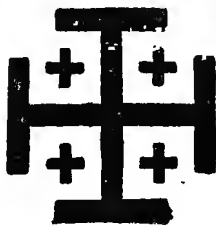
THE LETTER OF PAULA AND EUSTOCHIUM TO MARCELLA,

ABOUT THE HOLY PLACES.

(386 A.D.)

Translated by
AUBREY STEWART, Esq., M. A.

And Annotated by
COL. SIR CHARLES W. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.,
F.R.S., R.E.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE asceticism advocated with so much eloquence, by Ambrose at Milan, and Jerome at Rome, during the last quarter of the fourth century, captivated the minds of Christians of all ranks. In Rome itself, where society was at the time under the influence of strong religious excitement, the opinions of Jerome were adopted with enthusiasm. Partly from love of novelty, partly from the striking contrast between the austere life of an ascetic and the dissolute manners of the age, asceticism became the fashion. Many ladies of noble birth, renouncing the pleasures of society, devoted their lives to religious observances, and their wealth to good works ; whilst others wandered off to lead a life of seclusion in lands which had once been hallowed by the presence of Christ, or performed long weary pilgrimages to places which had been the scene of some memorable event in sacred history.

Amongst those who had been deeply moved by the preaching of Jerome, were two ladies who afterwards became his most fervent disciples : Paula, a Roman matron of ancient lineage, great wealth, and high social rank ; and Eustochium, her daughter, who, if we may believe her spiritual guide, was the first Roman maiden to take upon herself vows of virginity. During the synod held at Rome,

under Pope Damasus, Paula entertained as her guest Epiphanius, the venerable Bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus, and frequently received at her house Paulinus, Bishop of Antioch. The presence of these holy men appears to have turned Paula's thoughts towards the East; at any rate, it was during their visit that she, a weak, fragile woman, who had hitherto lived a life of luxurious ease, and been daintily borne from house to house by her eunuchs, determined to face the dangers and hardships of a journey to St. Paul and Anthony in the desert. When spring arrived, and the Bishops returned to their churches, Paula distributed her wealth to her family,¹ and, taking with her only Eustochium, accompanied them on their voyage. Why she changed her mind and finally settled at Bethlehem, we are not told; but the change was perhaps not unconnected with the return of Jerome to Palestine on the death of Damasus. Paula, after living twenty years in Bethlehem, died there, at the age of fifty-six, in 404 A.D., and as she left Rome in the spring of 382 A.D., her pilgrimage must have lasted about two years.²

It seems probable, from the frequent use of the first person, that Paula was accompanied by Jerome during a certain portion of her pilgrimage;³ and we may perhaps infer, from its first occurrence in connection with Joppa,

¹ The expression '*cuncta largita est*,' in chapter ii., is not to be taken too literally, for we afterwards find St. Paula subscribing towards the expenses of the brethren in Cyprus (iii.); distributing alms at Jerusalem (viii.); assisting the monks at Nitria (xviii.); and building cells and monasteries, and founding inns in Palestine (xix.). Perhaps the meaning is that Paula realized her property, and made suitable provision for her children before leaving Rome on her pilgrimage.

² Paula is a saint of the Latin Church, her day being January 26th. A description of her life and parentage will be found in Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' *art.* 'Paula.'

³ This was the opinion of Erasmus, and is the view still held by the Latin Church.

that she met him at that place, or possibly at Cæsarea Palæstina, on his return to Palestine.

The geographical value of the work is slight, but it supplies us with many interesting particulars of the places which a pilgrim of high social rank considered it necessary to visit in the last quarter of the fourth century. Perhaps the most important notice is that of the tomb of Helena, Queen of the Adiabeni, which is now the 'Tombs of the Kings,' to the north of Jerusalem.

From Rome Paula went down to the harbour, possibly Ostia, and thence, after bidding farewell to her children and relations, sailed for Cyprus. She stopped at Pontia (*Ponza*) Methone (*Modon*), Rhodes, and perhaps at Patara, in Lycia; and after reaching Cyprus, passed some time in visiting the numerous monasteries on the island.

From Cyprus she crossed to Seleucia, near the mouth of the Orontes, and then proceeded to Antioch, whence, after a short stay, she travelled, in the depth of winter, through Coele-Syria to Berytus, and onwards by the usual coast road to Ptolemais. Here Paula appears to have left the coast, and to have followed the road across the plain of Esdraelon, 'the plains of Megiddo,' to Legio (*Lejjûn*), and thence to have crossed the hills to Cæsarea Palæstina. She next visited Antipatris; Lydda, near which were Arimathea (*Rantieh*) and Nob (*Beit Nûba*); and Joppa. From this last place she returned to Emmaus—Nicompolis; and thence travelled by the Roman road through the Upper and Nether Bethorons to Gabaa (Gibeah of Benjamin); here she rested a short time before continuing her journey to Jerusalem by the great north road which passes close to the tomb of Helena (*Tombs of the Kings*) and enters the city by the Damascus Gate.

At Jerusalem the Proconsul, who was a friend of Paula's family, ordered the Prætorium to be prepared for her recep-

tion : but, in true pilgrim spirit, she declined the proffered hospitality, and preferred to live in a 'lowly cell' during her stay in the Holy City. The only holy places and relics mentioned in the narrative are the Cross, the Tomb, the stone that was rolled away from the mouth of the Sepulchre, the church on Mount Sion, the column of the flagellation in the portico of the church, and the place where the Holy Ghost descended on the disciples. It may perhaps be inferred, from the allusion to the gates 'fallen into cinders and ashes,' that, at the time of Paula's visit, the old wall on Sion was still a heap of ruins, and had not been rebuilt.

From Jerusalem Paula proceeded, by Rachel's tomb, to Bethlehem, where she visited the 'Grotto of the Saviour,' and was shown the inn, the stable, and the manger; she then went to the spot where the shepherds were keeping watch by night, and afterwards passed by Philip's fountain, at *Beit Sûr*; Escol, and the oak of Abraham, to Hebron. On her return journey to Jerusalem she visited Caphar Barucha, whence she saw in the distance the country of Sodom and Gomorrha, Zoar, and Engaddi, and Thecua (Tekoa).

Paula next travelled by Bethany and Adomim to Jericho, whence, after visiting Galgala and the fountain of Elisha, she went to the Jordan, to the spot where our Lord was baptized. From the Jordan she ascended to Bethel, and then passing through Shiloh, Shechem, and Samaria, came to Nazareth, whence she made an excursion to Cana and Capharnaum. On her return she climbed Mount Tabor, and here there is a break in the narrative of the journey, which is taken up again at Sochet (*Shurweikeh*). Paula probably returned to Jerusalem by the north road, and thence proceeded to Sochet by the Gaza road; and Jerome, possibly, did not think it necessary to describe a second time well-known towns,

such as Samaria, Shechem, Bethel, and Bethlehem, which he had already noticed.

From Sochet Paula went to Samson's fountain, near Eleutheropolis, and the tomb of Micah at Morasthim; and then travelled by Maresa, Lachis, and the desert, to the Pelusiac branch of the Nile; she next passed through the land of Gessen (Goshen), and over the plains of Tanis on her way to Alexandria, whence she visited Nitria. After a short stay with the monks and ascetics of Nitria, she was seized with a longing to return to the holy places in Palestine, and taking ship at Pelusium, crossed the sea to Majuma, probably the Majuma of Gaza. From this port she went to Bethlehem, and there, for the next three years, she was busily occupied in building cells, monasteries, and inns for pilgrims.

Paula's tact and patience, and her great capacity for management, are praised by St. Jerome, who also states that she was a good linguist, and had learned Hebrew that she might sing the Psalms in the original. During her residence at Bethlehem she spent all her fortune in charity and in the erection of buildings for charitable purposes; and before her death she became involved in debt. When she died, the whole Church gathered together to bear her to her last resting-place in the 'Grotto of the Nativity.'

The letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella appears to have been written during the first six years of the residence at Bethlehem. It invites Marcella in glowing terms to join them in the Holy Land; contrasts the quiet seclusion of Bethlehem with the bustle and crowd of Jerusalem; and brings vividly before us the 'enthusiastic delight with which these Roman ladies regarded every place and association in the Holy Land.'

The letter indicates the route which it was considered

desirable that pilgrims should follow, and the Holy Places that they should see, at the close of the fourth century. The tour from Jerusalem over Olivet to the Jordan, and thence to Bethlehem and Hebron, is that usual at the present day. From the south the pilgrim is apparently taken over the maritime plain to Samaria, and thence, after visiting Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, is brought back by Shiloh and Bethel to Bethlehem. The notice of the Holy Places is not quite so full as that in the Pilgrimage of St. Paula; but allusion is made to the 'Tomb of David,' which, though noticed by the Bordeaux Pilgrim, is not mentioned in the description of Paula's journey.

Marcella, to whom the letter is addressed, was a wealthy Roman lady of illustrious family. She had been much impressed by the teaching of Athanasius, when he was an exile in Rome, and in A.D. 374 had been confirmed in her ascetic tendencies by the Egyptian monk Peter. She is said to have been the first lady in Rome to make the monastic profession; and after the arrival of Jerome, her palace became 'a kind of convent, dedicated to the study of the Scriptures, and to psalmody and prayer.' Daily meetings were held, at which Jerome expounded the Scriptures to a circle of noble ladies, amongst whom Paula and Eustochium were prominent for their zeal and desire for knowledge. Marcella¹ resisted the efforts of her friends to draw her away from her charitable labours amongst the poor at Rome; and after a long life, devoted to good works, she died from the effect of injuries received during the sack of Rome by Alaric.

The known MSS. of the *Perigrinatio Sanctæ Paulæ*

¹ For further details of the life of Marcella, see Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' *art.* 'Marcella.'

belong to the eleventh century; and a list of these, as well as of the principal printed editions, is given in the preface to the *Itinera Hierosolymitana et Descriptiones Terræ Sanctæ*, vol. i., p. xvi., published by the Société de l'Orient Latin.

The translations have been made by Aubrey Stewart, Esq., M.A.

C. W. W.

Modern names are, as a rule, distinguished by italics. The references to the 'Bordeaux Pilgrim,' 'Antoninus,' etc., are to the English editions.

THE LETTER OF PAULA AND EUSTOCHIUM TO MARCELLA, ABOUT THE HOLY PLACES.

I. IF, after the Passion of our Lord, this place is accursed, as the wicked say that it is, what did St. Paul mean by hastening¹ to Jerusalem, that he might keep the day of Pentecost there? Why did he address those who would have held him back, saying: 'What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.'² What did all those other holy and illustrious men mean, whose alms and oblations, after the preaching of Christ, were sent to the brethren who were at Jerusalem? It would be a long task to mention, year by year, from the ascension of our Lord to the present day, how many bishops, how many martyrs, how many men eloquent in ecclesiastical learning, have come to Jerusalem, thinking themselves to be lacking in religion and in learning, and not to have received, as the saying is, a full handful of virtues, unless they had adored Christ in those very places from which the Gospel first shone forth from the Cross. Indeed, if even a distinguished orator³ thought somebody worthy of blame because he

¹ Acts xx. 16.

² Acts xxi. 13.

³ Cicero, 'De Div. in Cæcil.,' xii. 17.

had learned Greek not at Athens but at Lilybæum,¹ and had learned Latin, not at Rome, but in Sicily, because of course each province has something peculiar to itself, which another cannot possess in the same degree; why should we suppose that anyone can reach the highest pitch of devotion without the help of our Athens? Yet we do not say this because we deny that the kingdom of God is within us, or that there are holy men in other regions also, but because what we especially assert is this, that those who are the foremost men of the whole earth all alike flock hither together.

II. To these places we have come, not as persons of importance, but as strangers, that we might see in them the foremost men of all nations. Indeed, the company of monks and nuns is a flower and a jewel of great price among the ornaments of the Church. Whoever may be the first men in Gaul hasten hither. The Briton, separated from our world,² if he has made any progress in religion, leaves the setting sun, and seeks a place known to him only by fame and the narrative of the Scriptures. Why need we mention the Armenians, the Persians, the nations of India and Ethiopia, and the neighbouring country of Egypt, abounding in monks, Pontus and Cappadocia,³ Coele-Syria,⁴ and Mesopotamia, and all the multitudes of the East, who, fulfilling the words of our

¹ Now *Marsala*, in *Sicily*. Cicero when one of the two quæstors of *Sicily* resided at Lilybæum. The coins of the town are exclusively Greek, a proof of the extent to which Greek civilization prevailed in that part of the island.

² Virgil, *Ecl.* i. 67.

³ Pontus and Cappadocia, two Roman provinces in Eastern Asia Minor; the former on the *Black Sea* coast, the latter between Pontus and Cilicia on the *Mediterranean* coast.

⁴ The valley between *Lebanon* and *Anti-Lebanon*. It is mentioned by Jerome in the 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 3.

Saviour, 'Wherever the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together,'¹ flock into these places and display to us examples of diverse excellence?

III. Their speech differs, but their religion is one. There are almost as many choirs of psalm-singers as there are different nations.² Among all this will be found what is, perhaps, the greatest virtue among Christians—no arrogance, no overweening pride in their chastity; all of them vie with one another in humility. Whoever is last is reckoned as first. In their dress there is no distinction, no ostentation. The order in which they walk in procession neither implies disgrace nor confers honour. Fasts also fill no one with pride, abstinence is not commended, nor is modest repletion condemned. Every man stands or falls by the judgment of his own Lord; no one judges another, lest he should be judged by the Lord. And here the practice of back-biting, so common in most countries, finds absolutely no place. Far from hence is luxury and self-indulgence.

IV. There are so many places of prayer in the city itself, that one day cannot suffice for visiting them all. However, to come to the village of Christ³ and the inn of Mary⁴ (for everyone praises most that which he possesses), by what words, with what voice, can we describe to you the grotto of the Saviour? That manger, too, wherein

¹ Matt. xxiv. 28.

² Compare Stanley's description of 'all nations, kindreds, and languages worshipping, each with its peculiar rites, round what they all believe to be the tomb of their common Lord.'—'*Sinai and Palestine*,' p. 464.

³ Bethlehem.

⁴ Compare the curious description of the 'holy inn of the Virgin,' the grotto, the stable and the manger, in the '*Pil. of St. Paula*,' pp. 6-8. The Bordeaux Pilgrim (333 A.D.) simply mentions a basilica built by order of Constantine at Bethlehem where 'Christ was born.'

the babe wailed, is better honoured by silence than by imperfect speech. Where are spacious porticos? Where are gilded ceilings? Where are houses decorated by the sufferings and labours of condemned wretches? Where are halls¹ built by the wealth of private men on the scale of palaces, that the vile carcase of man may move among more costly surroundings, and view his own roof rather than the heavens, as if anything could be more beautiful than creation?² Behold, in this little nook of the earth the Founder of the heavens was born; here He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, beheld by the shepherds, shown by the star, adored by the wise men.

This place, I conceive, is holier than the Tarpeian Rock,³ which by its having been frequently struck by lightning shows that it is displeasing to God.

V. Read the Revelation of John, and consider what he says of the scarlet woman, and the blasphemies written upon her brow, of the seven hills, of the many waters, and of the fall of Babylon. 'Come out of her,' saith the Lord; 'come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'⁴ And turning back to Jeremiah, listen to a like Scripture. 'Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul. For Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become a habitation of devils and a hold of every unclean

¹ '*Basilicæ.*' A basilica was a pagan secular building used for various purposes. Its special characteristics were the division into nave and aisles, and the clerestory lighting. The allusion here is to the large private halls in the mansions of the wealthy, which are described by Vitruvius, '*De Arch.*,' vi. 3, 9.

² So I have ventured to translate *mundus* (A.S.).

³ The *rupes Tarpeia* on the south-east side of the Capitoline Hill at Rome.

⁴ Rev. xviii. 4.

spirit.¹ There is the Holy Church, there are the triumphs of the Apostles and martyrs, there is the true confession of Christ, the faith preached by the Apostle, and despised by the Gentiles, there the name of 'Christian' is daily exalted ; but worldliness, authority, the life of a great city, meetings and exchanges of salutations, praise and blame of one another, listening to others or talking to them, or even against one's will beholding so great a congregation of people, is foreign to the ideal set before monks and their quiet seclusion ; for if we see those who visit us we lose our quiet, and if we do not see them we are accused of pride. Sometimes, also, that we may return the calls of our visitors, we proceed to the doors of proud houses, and amid the sneering remarks of the servants enter their gilded portals.

VI. But in the village of Christ, as we said before, all is rusticity, and except for psalms, silence. Whithersoever you turn yourself, the ploughman, holding the plough-handle, sings Alleluia ; the perspiring reaper diverts himself with psalms, and the vine-dresser sings some of the songs of David while he trims the vine with his curved knife. These are the ballads of this country, these are the love-songs, as they are commonly called ; these are whistled by the shepherds, and are the implements of the husbandman. Indeed, we do not think of what we are doing or of how we look, but see only that for which we are longing.

VII. Oh, when will that time come when a breathless messenger shall bring us the news that our Marcella has

¹ A combination of Jer. li. 6 and Rev. xviii. 2. The comparison of Jerusalem with the Babylon of Jeremiah and Revelation, in order to contrast it strongly with Bethlehem, and the quiet, secluded life of those who resided there, shows how bitter the antagonism must have been between Jerome and the monastic party, and the Bishop of Jerusalem and his clergy.

reached the shore of Palestine, and all the choirs of monks, all the troops of nuns shall shout applause? We already are eager to start, and though no vehicle is expected, yet we wish to run to meet it. We shall clasp your hands, we shall behold your face, and shall scarcely be able to leave your long-wished-for embrace. When will that day come, when we shall be able to enter the grotto of our Saviour?¹ to weep with our sister, and with our mother, in the Sepulchre of the Lord?² Afterwards, to kiss the wood of the Cross,³ and on the Mount of Olives, together with our ascending Lord,⁴ to lift up our hearts and fulfil our vows? to see Lazarus come forth bound with grave clothes,⁵ and to see the waters of Jordan,⁶ made more pure by the baptism of the Lord? And thence to go to the folds of the shepherds,⁷ and pray in

¹ The 'Grotto of the Nativity,' at Bethlehem.

² At Jerusalem. According to the *Bordeaux Pilgrim* (p. 24), it was a vault, a stone's throw from Golgotha. See also 'Pil. of St. Paula,' pp. 5, 6.

³ The adoration of the Cross is mentioned in 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 5.

⁴ The *Bordeaux Pilgrim* (pp. 24, 25) connects the Transfiguration with the Mount of Olives, and does not allude to the Ascension. In the 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 11, the Mount is said to have been the scene of the Ascension, and of the annual sacrifice of the red heifer.

⁵ The tomb of Lazarus was shown to the *Bordeaux Pilgrim* at Bethany (p. 25); and the tomb and house of Mary and Martha to St. Paula ('Pil.,' p. 11.).

⁶ The spot alluded to is near the *Kusr el Yehûd*; it is mentioned by the *Bordeaux Pilgrim*, and the site is discussed in 'Antoninus Martyr,' App. I.—'The Holy Places on and near the Jordan.' It is connected by Jerome with the place at which the Israelites crossed Jordan, and at which Elijah and Elisha passed over ('Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 12).

⁷ The 'Tower Ader' of the Pilgrimage (pp. 8, 9), now *Beit Sahûr*, near Bethlehem.

the tomb of David ?¹ To behold Amos the prophet² even now lamenting on his rock with his shepherd's bugle-horn? To hasten to the tabernacles or tombs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their three noble wives?³ To behold the fountain wherein the eunuch was baptized by Philip?⁴ To go to Samaria,⁵ and adore with equal fervour the ashes of John the Baptist, of Elisha, and of Abdia? To enter the caves,⁶ wherein, in time of persecution and famine, troops of prophets were fed.

VIII. We shall go to Nazareth, and, according to the interpretation of its name, shall behold the flower⁷ of Galilee. Not far from thence will be seen Cana, wherein the waters were turned into wine. We shall go on to Itabyrium,⁸ and shall see the tabernacles of the Saviour, not, as Peter would have built them, with Moses and Elias, but with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thence we shall come to the Sea of Gennesareth, and shall see the five and four thousand men in the desert fed with five

¹ According to the Bordeaux Pilgrim (p. 27), the Tomb of David was not far from the basilica at Bethlehem; according to 'Antoninus Martyr' (p. 23), it was half a mile from the town.

² An allusion to Tekoa, *Kh. Tekûa*, the birthplace of Amos, and to the prophet's shepherd origin.

³ At Hebron. Compare 'Bordeaux Pilgrim,' p. 27, and 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 9.

⁴ The fountain is placed by the Bordeaux Pilgrim (p. 27) at Bethasora, Bethzur, now *Beit Sâr*, between Bethlehem and Hebron.

⁵ Compare the notice in the 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 13.

⁶ According to the 'Pil. of St. Paula' (p. 14), Abdias, or Obadiah, hid the prophets in two caves.

⁷ The proper Hebrew name of Nazareth was *Nétzer*, a shoot or sprout. The comparison of Nazareth with a flower is not uncommon in the works of later pilgrims. Quaresmius compares it to a rose.

⁸ Mount Tabor. The name occurs in the same form in the LXX. and Josephus.

and seven loaves.¹ Before us will appear the city of Naim,² at whose gates the widow's son was raised from the dead. We shall see, too, Hermoniim,³ and the brook of Endor,⁴ whereat Sisera was overcome. We shall also see Capharnaum, that familiar witness of the miracles of our Lord, and likewise the whole of Galilee. And then, accompanied by Christ, when we have returned to our grotto, after passing Silo⁵ and Bethel,⁶ and the other places in which the banners of the Church have been raised, as though to celebrate the victories of the Lord, we will sing constantly, we will often weep, we will pray without ceasing, and, wounded by the dart of our Saviour, we will repeat together, 'I have found Him whom my soul sought for; I will hold Him fast and will not let Him go.'⁷

¹ The feeding of the 5,000 is mentioned in the 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 14, but without any precise indication of the place at which the miracle occurred.

² Now *Nein*.

³ Psalm xlii. 6. Probably *Jebel Dâhy*. Compare 'Pil. of St. Paula,' p. 14.

⁴ An error for Kishon. Psalm lxxxiii. 9, 10.

⁵ Shiloh, *Seilân*. ⁶ *Beitîn*. ⁷ Song of Solomon, iii. 4.

THE END.

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1. "Paula et Eustochium, de Locis Sanctis."
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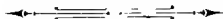
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WALTER BESANT AND EDWARD HENRY PALMER.

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